DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 005 PS 026 303

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TITLE The Role of Mother and Father in the Value Socialization Process of Adolescents.
PUB DATE 1997-11-00
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the NCFR Fatherhood and Motherhood in a Diverse and Changing World (59th, Arlington, VA, November 7-10, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescent Development; *Adolescents; Birth Order; Comparative Analysis; Fathers; Mothers; *Parent Influence; *Parent Role; Socialization; *Values Education
IDENTIFIERS Adolescent Attitudes; *Instrumental Values; *Terminal Values

ABSTRACT

The values humans possess take form in relation to the day-to-day activities and decisions (instrumental values) and as criteria for a lifetime (terminal values). This study compares the importance level assigned by adolescents to instrumental and terminal values and the relationship of adolescents' perception of value importance with their parents' perceptions. It was hypothesized that perception of instrumental values importance rather than terminal values importance would be significantly correlated between adolescents and parents, adolescent value importance would be more closely aligned to mother values importance, and adolescent perception of mother values importance would be more accurate than perception of father values importance. A questionnaire was used to elicit information about self and other perceptions of the importance of five instrumental (for example, being obedient, dutiful, and respectful) and five terminal (for example, living in a world at peace, making a lasting contribution) values. Participating were 30 families (mother, father, and one adolescent) in a midwest rural setting. Findings indicated that there were no differences between first-born and later-born children in the accuracy of their perceptions. The importance of values for mothers and adolescents was significantly positively correlated for: (1) being obedient, dutiful, and respectful; (2) being forgiving of others; and (3) being happy and content. No values importance statements were correlated for fathers and adolescents, suggesting that adolescents were more closely aligned with their mothers. There was a much greater ability for adolescents to perceive mother values importance than father values importance. Adolescents were most closely aligned with mothers in instrumental values importance and also in their ability to perceive mothers' instrumental values importance. (Contains three tables to support research data.) (KB)

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THE ROLE OF MOTHER AND FATHER IN THE VALUE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS OF ADOLESCENTS

Problem

A dichotomy often exists between self perception and the perception of others. Consideration of this dichotomy is especially important when studying the effect of mothers and fathers on the value socialization of adolescents from a family science perspective. As personal value related perceptions are shaped, clear and unclear messages are sent to others about those values. What mothers and fathers shape in their minds may or may not be perceived by adolescents in the same way.

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Theoretical Background

The development and dynamic changes of perception is a lifelong process but may be most critical in the adolescent years. Adolescents are engaged in the developmental process of mastery of their environment and determining their place in adulthood. This perceiving process may move the adolescent closer to the perceptions of the parent(s) or, as a means of

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individuation, move them away from the parent(s). Differences in adolescent perception and parental perception may be a function of social pressure or a function of the degree of autonomy desired by the adolescent. Whatever the reason, the need for individuation will be reflected in the relationship of value perception between parent(s) and adolescents.

Valuing is an internal process that is affected by the near and far environments. The values humans possess take form in relation to day-to-day activities and decisions (instrumental values) and as criteria for a lifetime (terminal values) (Rokeach, 1973). The values we hold determine how we see the world and are one of the foundations for developing a personal reality. We develop our own reality and, at the same time, develop perceptions of the reality of others (Reiss, 1981).

Previous Research

Rosen (1968) suggested three methods used by parents to transmit values to their children. The first transmission method is instructing children explicitly on value importance. A parent might specifically tell a child that education is highly valued in the family. A second means for transmitting values is openly through positive or negative reinforcement of appropriate responses or behavior. A parent might pay for good report card. Rosen's third transmission method is parental modeling of appropriate values. The parent's behavior is the transmission medium. A parent might take evening courses or read material that improves his/her education.

The literature suggests several independent variables that influence the concordance of adolescent and mother/father values. Smith (1982) suggests the following variables related to

parental influence: (a) accuracy of adolescent perceptions of parental preferences, (b) adolescent identification with and closeness to the parent, (c) intensity with which the parents hold and put forth the goal or orientation which might be conveyed to the adolescent, and (d) degree of agreement between the mother and father on pertinent values.

Alwin (1984) suggests additional independent variables that influence the perception of values; including parent education, family income, occupational status, religion, number of children in the family and average age of children. Research findings suggest that the parent's education is the strongest predictor variable. It is also suggested that the first born child may have the greatest likelihood of socialization experiences that will foster transmission of parental values (Rosen, 1964).

Research Methodology

Research was conducted in an attempt to bridge the dichotomy of self perception and other perception of personal values for adolescents, mothers, and fathers. The purpose of the project was to compare the importance level of both instrumental and terminal values (Rokeach, 1973) and the relationship of self perception of value importance with the perception of others.

The following hypotheses were tested: (a) perception of instrumental values importance rather than terminal values importance will be significantly correlated between adolescents and parents, (b) adolescent value importance will be more closely alined (significantly correlated) to mother values importance, and (c) adolescent perception of mother values importance will be more accurate (significantly correlated) than perception of father values importance.

A brief questionnaire was developed to elicit information about self and other perception

of the importance of ten values, five instrumental and five terminal. Participants (mother, father and one adolescent) were asked to rate the importance of each value for themselves and their perception of importance for the other two members of their family group. Additional demographic questions, based on suggestions from the literature, were asked including: education, occupation, age, income, religious preference, and the prevalent method for transmitting values.

The purposive non-random sample for the study consisted of thirty families in a Midwest rural setting. Incomes for the primarily dual-earner families averaged $40,000. All respondents were Christian. Eighty-four percent of adolescents indicated that their parents transmitted values through their behavior in value related situations. The remainder (sixteen percent) stated that parents transmitted values through open instruction.

Results

No differences were found between first born children and later born children in their ability to accurately perceive parental values. This is in contrast to Rosen's (1968) earlier findings that first born children will have a closer connection to parental values.

The importance of values for mothers and adolescents was significantly positively correlated for three of the ten values. Correlated values included: (a) being obedient, dutiful and respectful (.663*), (b) being forgiving of others (.689*), and (c) being happy and content (.661*). In contrast, no values importance statements were correlated for fathers and adolescents. The data suggests that adolescents are more closely alined with their mothers when assessing the importance of values. (Table 1)

Analysis of adolescent perception of parental values importance indicated a much greater ability for adolescents to perceive mother values importance. Significant positive correlations existed between adolescent perception of mother and mother values importance for four of the ten values statements. Correlated values included: (a) being obedient, dutiful and respectful (.590*), (b) having a sense of responsibility and reliability (.733**), (c) having an exciting, active life (.690*), and (d) being happy and content (.598*). In addition, grand mean comparisons indicated a significant positive correlation (.564*). No significant correlation was indicated for adolescent perception of father and father values importance. (Table 2)

Correlation analysis of the combined mean for instrumental and terminal values indicated that adolescents are most closely alined with mothers in instrumental values importance and also in their ability to perceive mothers instrumental values importance. Significant correlations were indicated for mother and adolescent instrumental value importance (.708**) and for the ability of adolescents to perceive mother instrumental values importance (.687*). Correlations were not significant for mother terminal values. Significant correlations were not evident for father instrumental and terminal values importance nor for adolescent ability to perceive values importance for fathers. (Table 3)

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

Gender differences exist in the transmission of values and the ability of adolescents to accurately state parental values importance. It appears from this data that mothers do a better job of transmitting values importance to adolescents, especially for instrumental values. Based on this small data set, mothers and adolescents appear to be more connected in actual values

importance and in the perception adolescents have of mother value importance. It appears, based on these results, that the discussion of values transmission from one generation to the next is too general. It is important to assess the difference in the quality of value transmission for mothers and adolescents compared to fathers and adolescents.

This research raises several additional questions. Are there adolescent gender differences in the ability to receive values importance transmissions? Why are mothers better able to transmit instrumental values to adolescents and why is it more difficult to transmit terminal values. How do single parent mothers and fathers deal with the gender differences in their ability to transmit values to adolescents? Are certain values not being transmitted when children are raised in single parent households?

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TABLE 1

Correlation of Mother/Adolescent and Father/Adolescent Values

Values	Mother/Adolescent	Father/Adolescent
Being obedient, dutiful and respectful	.663*	-.166
Having a sense of responsibility and reliability	.007	.015
Being honest and truthful	.036	.036
Helping others	.532	.055
Being forgiving of others	.689*	.268
Having an exciting, active life	-.248	.284
Living in a world at peace	.255	.239
Being respected and admired by others	.437	.121
Making a lasting contribution	.439	-.077
Being happy and content	.661*	.067

* $P < .05$

TABLE 2

Correlation of Adolescent Value Perception of Mother and Father Values and Actual Mother and Father Values

Values	Adolescent Perception/Mother	Adolescent Perception/Father
Being obedient, dutiful and respectful	.590*	-.254
Having a sense of responsibility and reliability	.733**	.102
Being honest and truthful	.293	.317
Helping others	.197	.104
Being forgiving of others	.307	.480
Having an exciting, active life	.690*	-.111
Living in a world at peace	.386	.065
Being respected and admired by others	.374	.029
Making a lasting contribution	.182	.426
Being happy and content	.598*	.087

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

TABLE 3

Correlation of Mother and Father Instrumental and Terminal Values with Adolescent Values and Adolescent Perception of Mother and Father Values

	Adolescent Values	Adolescent Perception
Father Instrumental Values	-.110	.198
Father Terminal Values	-.084	-.097
Mother Instrumental Values	.708**	.687*
Mother Terminal Values	.395	.514

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$